



TOWN OF BERWYN HEIGHTS

Prince George's County, Maryland

Incorporated in 1896 ~ Sixth Oldest Municipality in PG County

TOWN MEETING MINUTES APRIL 10, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Calvo, Mayor Pro Tem (MPT) Wilkinson, CMs Almoguera and Kulpa-Eddy. CM Dennison had an excused absence. Also present were Town Administrator (TA) Murphy, Officer Roberson, Treasurer Lape, and Clerk Harper.

Mayor Calvo led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. HEARINGS

FY 2014 Town Budget: Mayor Calvo gave an overview of the FY 2014 budget for purposes of its formal introduction. The defining feature is a 15% decline in property tax revenues due to the recent triennial reassessments. This results in a total operating budget of \$2,414,717 reflecting a 4% decline over FY 2013. Council made up some of the shortfall with cuts in expenditures, use of additional revenues and transfers from surplus. The real property and personal property rates will remain at 48.6 cents per \$100 of assessed real property value, and \$1.215 per \$100 of assessed personal property value, with an added road tax of 3 and 7.5 cents, respectively. The road tax is set aside in the infrastructure reserve to fund for future road repair projects.

Cuts were made across all departments, including two currently vacant positions: a full time police officer and one full time Public Works administrative assistant. Some part-time hours were returned to these departments to give them enough flexibility when workloads peak. Restoration of part time hours was funded by \$40,000 pulled from surplus, which represents a 3 year commitment, totaling \$120,000. The Council also added funds to a salary pool that will be used for a COL separate merit increases, with roll-up costs in FY 2015. The 3 year plan to deal with the shortfall also includes a potential tax increase of 1 to 1.5 cents in FY 2016.

In addition, the Council continued to transfer money into the reserves to fund future Public Works vehicle purchases and infrastructure improvements. The Council welcomed the restoration of some Highway User Revenues (HUR) to a level of almost \$60,000, which will be added to the infrastructure reserve. Overall, the FY 2014 budget is modest and does not take on large new commitments. However, it does make many small adjustments that save money and help the Town weather the period of tight budgets.

CM Kulpa-Eddy reported that the Code Department budget cuts part-time staff hours. Additional savings come from relying more heavily on email to communicate with clients and using Public Works Department staff to perform vehicle maintenance tasks. It is hoped that the new code car will reduce repair costs. CM Almoguera reported that the Administration Department is not facing significant cutbacks in staff hours but will tighten belts all around to save money.

MPT Wilkinson said that the Public Works Department cut the full time administrative assistant position for the largest savings. It will use additional part-time hours. Council funded to bring in staff when the workload is heavy. The Department anticipates few capital purchases as most of the big ticket capital needs were taken care of during the last couple of years.

Mayor Calvo said that the Council was thoughtful in addressing the budget shortfall, and able to reduce expenditures without sacrificing the Council's long-term priorities. At 7:55 p.m., Mayor Calvo opened the hearing. With no comments, he closed the hearing at 7:56 p.m.

Public Safety Taxing District Budget Hearing: Mayor Calvo said that the PSTD budget remains largely unchanged and is proposed to come in at \$71,600, including a \$3,400 surplus. The special tax rates remain at 10 cents per \$100 of assessed real property value and 15 cents per \$100 of assessed personal property value. Commercial real property assessments have not declined as much as residential values and therefore this budget is in good shape. It continues to fund one full-time police officer, Detective Unger, who spends much of his time investigating crimes in the business district.

At 8:00 p.m., Mayor Calvo opened the hearing on the PSTD budget. With no comments, the hearing was closed at 8:01 p.m.

2. MINUTES

Clerk Harper read a summary of the March 13 Town meeting minutes. On a motion by CM Kulpa-Eddy and second by MPT Wilkinson, the minutes were approved.

3. TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer Lape gave the Treasurer's report for March. Speed camera revenues were included as a separate item.

4. MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Calvo reported that during the last month the spotlight in the General Assembly was on Prince George's County Public Schools. Executive Baker had proposed legislation in March that would have given him the authority to appoint the school superintendent and control the school budget. The so-called School Takeover Bill 1107 became a compromise bill, but proposes significant restructuring of the school system.

On June 1, the County Executive will have the authority to pick the superintendent from a pool of 3 candidates selected by a panel appointed by the Governor and the State Superintendent of Schools. The superintendent/CEO will then report directly to the County Executive and become a member of his cabinet. The County Executive will also have new powers in determining the make-up of the school board, which was expanded from 9 to 13 members. He will be able to appoint 3 or 4 additional school board members, as well as the chair and vice chair from amongst the elected board members. The school board will retain approval authority over the school budget. Mayor Calvo thinks that the County Executive taking on more responsibility for the school system is a positive development that will lead to greater accountability. Mayor Calvo also commended Berwyn Heights' school board representative Peggy Higgins for keeping residents well informed throughout the legislative process.

Mayor Calvo continued that progress is being made in other areas of Prince George's County Public Schools. Several high schools have seen academic improvement with students taking more Advanced Placement (AP) classes, and doing well on AP, SAT and ACT tests. Parkdale Principal Sheryl Logan received this year's Washington Post Distinguished Educator award for Prince George's County.

In other news, the Town Council received a presentation from the developers of the Greenbelt Station south core, and learned that NVHomes and subsidiary Homes are getting ready to start building the town homes, condos and apartments according to plans originally approved in 2006. Some units may be move-in ready within a year. While the development comes with new traffic challenges, it also brings improvements to the Indian Creek trail system. The hiker-biker trail was extended to the Greenbelt Metro Station, with an improved crossing at the intersection of 58th Avenue and Greenbelt Road. One big, unresolved issue is where children from the development will be attending school. Berwyn Heights will also see the first installments of the \$1 million Greenbelt Station developers' commitment to pay the Town for traffic and safety impacts. The revised agreement specifies that the compensation funds will be paid when construction permits are pulled, prior to the fall.

At the last worksession, the Council voted to move forward with the design and engineering of sidewalks, accepting a proposal from C. P. Johnson & Associates. The Council will be working with C. P. Johnson in the coming months to get the project ready for bidding this summer. While revenues from the speed camera program are not sufficient to pay for the sidewalks, the additional Greenbelt Station compensation money should provide the needed funds.

Mayor Calvo continued that the Maryland legislative session recently ended with good news for Berwyn Heights. The State's Community Parks & Playground includes grant funds for the renovation of Pop's Park for which CM Almoguera wrote the grant application. The State budget also includes \$80,000 in matching funds for the installation of emergency generators at the Town Center. CM Kulpa-Eddy is to be congratulated for her successful advocacy in making this happen. The Council thanks Town Administrator Murphy for getting the bond bill request ready, and Senator Pinsky and Delegate Gaines for championing it in the legislature.

Mayor Calvo concluded with announcements of upcoming events, including the Nevada Street trail dedication and the Berwyn Heights Volunteer Fire Department annual awards banquet this Saturday, the Senior's Club 30th Anniversary celebration this Sunday, the Talent Show next Friday, the Student Mock Town Council on May 22, Berwyn Heights Day on May 4, and the Yard Sale on June 22.

5. DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Administration: CM Almoguera reported that the Administration Department is busy working on next year's budget, while she is focused on planning the playground. She anticipates that the old playground will be dismantled in May and reconstructed over the summer. A dedication ceremony is anticipated for the summer. She welcomed suggestions from residents for the playground.

Code Compliance: CM Kulpa-Eddy reminded residents to obtain permits and hire reputable, licensed contractors for any waterproofing and foundation repairs. Installation of drainage systems necessitated by spring rains or basement flooding. The Code Department stands ready to advise and assist. Further, CM Kulpa-Eddy noted that County Councilmember Olson will hold a Town Hall meeting on April 22 at Parkdale High School.

Parks and Recreation, Education and Civic Affairs: No report.

Public Health and Safety: Officer Roberson gave the police activities report as Chief Antolik was away for training. He said that there were 7 Part I offenses in April, down from the 5 year average of 9. The year to-date total was 14, as opposed to the 5 year average of 22. In addition, the police wrote 248 citations and made 11 arrests: 2 driving while intoxicated, 1 disorderly conduct and 1 disturbing the peace. The speed camera program yielded 224 citations. Fifty-eight citations were issued and 156 remain outstanding. Officer Roberson also warned that thefts of ear buds for i-pods, especially the Apple brand, are on the rise.

Mayor Calvo suggested the Edmonston Road speed camera not be trained on the stop sign because drivers will slow down for it. Officer Roberson said that he forwarded the message to the speed camera vendor so that the camera can be focused on the sections of road where drivers are most likely to speed. MPT Wilkinson said that he noticed that many visitors coming to Lake Artemesia on weekends will park on the bridge when the parking lot is full. He instructed Public Works to paint the curbs yellow to indicate 'no parking' and suggested the police check to make sure the parking prohibition is complied with.

Public Works: MPT Wilkinson reported that Public Works has implemented a citizen's comment to provide a bin for recycling old electronic equipment at the Works yard the week prior to an electronic recycling day in Greenbelt. Public Works staff will take the bin over to Greenbelt on recycling day. Public Works received the mesh that will be installed at parking area next to the Indian Creek T-ball field. They plan to install the mesh as soon as possible to protect the field during the spring season.

MPT Wilkinson continued that the Safe Routes to School grant will be reviewed tomorrow. He received an invitation to speak at the induction ceremony of the Beta club on April 16, which he plans to honor.

6. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Most committee reports were given under the Mayor's report, as CM Dennison was absent.

Neighborhood Watch-Emergency Preparedness: CM Kulpa-Eddy reported that NW-EP has scheduled a trailer cleanup for April 13, with a rain makeup day on April 20. A CPR class was rescheduled for April 16 at the Bowie fire station.

7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was none.

8. NEW BUSINESS

Ordinance No. 160 - 1st Reading and Introduction of FY 2014 Town Budget: Clerk Harper read the adopting Ordinance. MPT Wilkinson moved and CM Almoguera seconded to introduce the budget. Mayor Calvo said that the main features of the FY 2014 budget have been outlined earlier in the meeting and asked if there were any additional comments. CM Kulpa-Eddy said that she has heard from many residents that they would like police staffing to be kept at current levels to ensure coverage. With no further comments, the Council voted 4 to 0 to introduce the budget.

Ordinance No. 161 - 1st Reading and Introduction of the FY 2014 Public Safety Taxing District Budget: Clerk Harper read the adopting Ordinance. MPT Wilkinson moved and CM Almoguera seconded to introduce the FY 2014 PSTD budget. CM Kulpa-Eddy pointed out that some of the dates on this Ordinance need to be corrected. With no further comments, the Council voted 4 to 0 to introduce the PSTD budget.

9. CITIZENS DISCUSSION

There were none.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

Signed: Kerstin Harper, Town Clerk

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